1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

623 628 631 centres we found evidence of this inter-village organization. In Malhar there was a *panchayat* composed, theoretically, from members of seven castes; but Kols have inter-village councils of their own and the leaders of each village, along with a few other leading men, occasionally come together when important matters are under consideration. Such a meeting is called only for something which seems vitally important and affects the total life of the community. Their sense of social solidarity is so acute that a matter affecting one is regarded as affecting all. Near Katni there is an inter-village organization which includes twenty to thirty Kol communities, and this federation is said to be very active in matters pertaining to the life of the Kols of that area.

623 628 631 Sometimes the heads of the villages in a federation are consulted by sending around a sort of circular, giving information about the case and instructing them to think over the decision which should be eventually reached. Occasionally they are then and there asked to pronounce their opinion. In Barela we were in a house to which had just come a 203 communication, originating in Barela, and which was being circularized among the villages of the federation to which Barela belonged. It was [212] written for the Kols by the village writer of the Kayasth caste and we were able to secure a copy of it. The circular affords a good example of the way in which certain matters are settled, and shows that the matter of eating is serious enough to be called to the attention of the larger group. The translation of the document is as follows:

From Barela *Panch*.

Sri,

To

All the kings (members) of the various *panchayats*, we (the members of the local *panchayats*) send our very respectful greetings. We would respectfully make this complaint that people under your jurisdiction (*i.e.* Kols) eat the flesh of swine cooked by the Kumhars (potters). If this is so why should we not start the pipe with them (have social intercourse with them). You get the animal killed by the Kumhars and then wash it with water that has already been touched by them (and so polluted), and if a girl becomes pregnant you punish the family by the imposition of a fine or a caste dinner.

If these are facts please admit them or if things are otherwise, say so and make your mark (signature). Also

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

twelve rupees, payable in two equal instalments. Two *saris* are often presented at this time—one for the girl and another for her mother. The washing of the feet and the payment of the bride price are definite expressions of the acceptance of the proposal. Nevertheless, the engagement thus sealed may be broken if either party is dissatisfied. If the girl's side breaks the engagement they must return the bride price and the presents. If the boy's side breaks it they are not entitled to any refund and the money may be kept by the girl's family.

(*b*) *Betrothal and Lagan.* The *lagan* is a letter given by the bride's father to the bridegroom's father, appointing the day of the marriage and ceremonies connected therewith and thus providing an outline for this part of the wedding cycle. The *lagan* should be prepared by the *pandit* of the girl's village or one selected by her family. When the time is ripe for the boy and girl to be formally married the Brahmin priest is called to the house or is informed of the proposal and is asked to write up the *lagan*. The *lagan* should have the complete programme for the *sadi* worked out after consulting horoscopes and taking into account auspicious or inauspicious seasons and circumstances. The best days for weddings are, in order, Monday, Saturday, Thursday and Tuesday, and the *lagan* will take this into account. The luckiest months are *Chaita* (March-April), *Magh* (January-February) and *Phagun* (February-March). After the *lagan* is written the paper is sprinkled with *haldi* water. Here is an actual example of a Kol *lagan*:

SHRI

Shri—may god Ganesh help us. Hari the lord was worshipped with *gur* (raw sugar) and *sendur* (vermilion). The son of Sail named Matukdhari has been selected as the bridegroom. May the lord make the marriage time auspicious.

On Wednesday, the sixth day of the bright fortnight of Magh, the marriage bower will be constructed; on Thursday, the seventh day, the anointing ceremony will take place; on Friday, the eighth, the bridegroom's marriage party will come and on Saturday, the ninth, the circumambulation of the marriage post will take place.

Written by Radha kunji
on the second day of the bright fortnight of Magh.
May all be auspicious!

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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For a *lagan* such as the above the *pandit* is paid an amount which varies according to the section of the country. Near Jubbulpore he is said to receive Rs. 1-4-0; in Rewa State it was from Re. 1 to Rs. 1-8-0; in the Kaimur hills annas eight. This is paid by the boy's father who takes the *lagan* to his village where it is read to all who are interested so that they may come to know about the arrangements. It is common to promise the *pandit* a fee for the performing of the ceremonies in connection with the forthcoming wedding. This fee is generally said to be about three rupees and must be paid before the Brahmin will come and begin his work at the expected time. Occasionally there is bargaining between the two, and if the *pandit* thinks that the boy's father can pay more he holds out or compromises for a larger sum. We were told that should the two disagree no marriage is possible until a settlement has been reached, as they cannot ask a Brahmin other than the one who has jurisdiction over the girl's village to perform the ceremonies. A settlement is usually reached before long and the rest of the night is spent in eating, singing and dancing, the women of the girl's house providing for this entertainment. During the meal time the *marki* containing the curds is opened by the girl's father and is shared by both the parties.

In the morning the *pandit* is expected to deliver the *lagan*, which he has prepared the night before. He had to make certain enquiries and consult his books in order to prepare a proper one. Before he arrives with it, preparations are made to receive him. The place where he will sit to read the *lagan* is plastered and in the centre is placed a brass *lota* filled with water, into which two-pice coins have been dropped, and on top of which is set an earthenware *dip* or lamp. The Brahmin may come with the *lagan* already prepared, or he may write it off from memory then and there in their presence. He then reads it to the two parties and gives them any other advice he thinks necessary.

The boy's party usually stays the rest of the day and another night, leaving for their village on the third morning.

The priest is ordinarily used in the later *sadi* which will be performed according to the time set in the *lagan*, but in Maihar State we were informed that after the writing of the *lagan* by the Brahmin he may be dispensed with and the work which he ordinarily would do may be performed by the *bahnoi* (a sister's husband) or the *phupha* (father's sister's husband).

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On the third morning preparations are made by the bridegroom's party to return to their own village. The girl's mother, with other female members of the family or relatives in the village, prepares the

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

CHAPTER IX

MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

The Kols are fundamentally a primitive tribe, even though they have been for many years in contact with Hindu thought and life. It will be found therefore that they have outlooks which are properly termed animistic. This does not necessarily imply that their thought forms are simple and that a 'primitive' people have a 'primitive' outlook. Kol thought, though not philosophic, is complex and involved, and has behind it a long history. These beliefs are not limited to 'primitive' people either, but are shared with other groups living about them, and extend up into the very fabric of the thinking of intelligent Indians.

There are certain forces which are opposing this point of view, such as education, travel, books, and modern inventions, to say nothing of contacts with higher Hinduism and the political movements of the day. There are many ancient institutions such as caste, the authority of the Brahmins, and idolatry, which are being questioned at the present time; and these questionings have their repercussions among the villages and tend toward a sophisticated attitude toward many of the beliefs described below.

There are other forces which aid in the maintenance of animistic outlooks: ignorance of what is going on tends toward the *status quo*: women among the Kols are universally illiterate and are the stronghold of the old ways. Many a Kol says that he puts on charms for his wife's sake, but adds that he really does not believe that they do much good. Custom is another force very difficult to move. It is very strong over India and its persistence, in spite of knowledge to the contrary, is a thing which strikes an observer. Belief may change, but custom, though rationalized, remains as before.

A word of caution should be uttered concerning generalities in regard to animistic thought. There are few, if any, perfectly consistent generalizations which may be made concerning Kol beliefs and outlooks. For example, when the spirit world is described, one should not immediately conclude that *all* Kols enter into these concepts, any more than one should judge that all westerners regard the number thirteen with superstitious fear.

THE SPIRIT WORLD. To the average Kol all things animate and inanimate may be the abode of spirits of one sort or another.

lcGriffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

[P 247]

Chapter XII

LIFE STORIES OF LIVING KOLS

Sukhulal: A Kol who Stayed in his Village

I was born in the village of Kharara Ghat and was the youngest of five brothers. There were also three sisters in my family, which was a large one, as there are about fifty living relatives on my father's side alone. When I was about sixteen years of age my parents decided that I should be married and they found a girl for me in the village of Barela. My wife and I have lived happily together, and we have had two sons. My father died two years ago (in 1935). I have never had to leave Kharara Ghat in order to earn money. I have always seemed to be able to find things to do about the village and have earned enough to be well supplied with the things I need. One thing I do is to go into the forest and cut wood which I carry on my head to Jubbulpore. It is hard work, but it has to be done. My wife and sons also help out by gathering *tendu* leaves for the *biri* manufacturers. All of my five brothers live here in Barela. Together we control about fifteen acres of land which is rented from a *malguzar*. It is not all in one place, but in three or four places. We all do our share of work on this, and the income from the wheat and pulse is shared evenly by us. But all the money I make from selling wood, or grass, or *tendu* leaves I keep myself and we do not share it.

I have become one of the *panchayat* of this village and take a keen interest in the welfare of this village and our community. I would like you to put a school in our village. The nearest school is four miles away—too far for our small children to go even if we were sure they would be treated right if they were admitted. I can read a little and sign my name. I never went to school, but learned this from a man in Jubbulpore, who used to teach me after I had sold my wood. I even have bought some books.

I have no debts and do not drink any strong liquors. I have never been seriously ill, nor had any serious trouble in the family, nor have we suffered from the want of food and clothing. I have never had an accident either even though I have gone on hunting expeditions in charge of beaters. Very often some Europeans from Jubbulpore come out to our village which is close to good hunting places and I go with them and show them where they may find game.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

159 I have tried to be an honest man and the police and government [648 forest officers trust me and have just offered me the post of *Sarkari* [622 *Mukaddam* (government headman) of my village. This is a very high 554] honour for me for which my friends will respect me very much.

BAJRANJI: A KOL AND A FAMINE[1]

I was born in Rewa, my *desh*, but I have no idea of the date of my birth nor of the names of my father or mother. When my parents left Rewa and came to Barela I was just an infant and didn't know much about what was going on. After three or four years my father died in Lunsar village while my mother died in Barela when I was thirty years old.

When my father died I did not get much property, but whatever I got was used up in feeding the people of the community at the time of his death, and later on more was spent on the ceremonial feast following my mother's death. At that time I had a few head of cattle, but soon after four of them were killed and eaten by tigers.

I have been married twice, and by my first wife had two children. The first child was a girl who is now married and who has children of her own. She is about twenty-one years old now. The second child was a boy who is now about twelve years of age. But when these children were about twelve and eight respectively their mother became [587] very ill and died. Whatever money I had, all was spent on her for her recovery, but it was of no use. Then I married another wife and this cost me to a great extent the remaining money that I had. [434] Between the two I spent all the money which I possessed, which was about Rs. 300/- in cash and I found myself moneyless.

When I was a boy I was very eager to learn, but it was very difficult for a Kol to think of studying with the Brahmins. The village school seemed reserved for them. So my parents could not send me and they didn't care much about my education, and though I couldn't study I made friends with an educated boy and he helped me and I [212] finished the first Hindi book, but that too I have forgotten and cannot now read nor write.

When my mother died there were three of us: my sister, my [164] brother and myself. Both my brother and sister have since died of plague here in Barela, but I was saved by God's grace. About eight years ago my brother died leaving his wife and children. I do not [545] keep her with me in our home for I know that it would be hard on me and my wife and that if I keep her it would really mean that there will

1 See plate XXVI.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

PLATE XXVI.

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142
291
516

Bajranji—A Kol in Famine time.

[212]

Dholi—A Literate Kol.

[facing p. 248]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

from the very first day and for two or three days he continued it, and so I thought that if this is all I am going to get in school every day then I had better stop, so I ran away from school. When my father discovered that I was not going he was very angry, and tried to compel me to go to school, but I ran away to Jubbulpore where I met another Kol who knew me and the family well and he cared for me for two days, and then brought me back to Barela. At this time I was about ten years of age. My father again and again advised me to go to school, but I never went again. Since that time I have regretted this very much, especially when I see some of my classmates (not Kols) who began their education along with me, and are now teachers in the same school in Barela. When they see me working as a coolie they laugh at my condition, but what can I do except put my head down in shame, for it was my own fault that I stayed away from school. I am able to read and write just a bit, but this is nothing compared to the education they have received. I really repent very much and curse my luck and fate.

When my father finally saw that I was not going to school and had no liking for it, he asked me to learn some trade and so I began to work along with him. Once he got angry with me during the working hours because I did not do just as he told me to do, and he punished me before other people; and as this made me angry, I ran away from home again, and on leaving I stole Rs. 22/- from my father and went straight to Narsinghpur (about fifty miles from Jubbulpore). I reached the station in the evening and got down from the train and wanted to stop in a *dharmasala* for the night, but the railway porters would not let me out of the station premises without a ticket, for I had none, and for fear that the money I had would be snatched away from me by a ticket-collector or a thief I had it in my private parts. As I could get no place in Narsinghpur I went straight on to Itarsi (about 100 miles further) without a ticket.

I stayed a month in Itarsi searching for work, but could not find a thing to do and there were not many Kols there. I knew I must go back to Jubbulpore as I had only Rs. 10/- left and it would soon be gone and I would be far from help. So I returned to Jubbulpore and searched for work. Fortunately I got work as a *panka* puller in a bungalow for the period of five months and received Rs. 12/- a month. To my great surprise I learned that my father had reported my absence to the police station in Barela and before long some of the police in Jubbulpore caught me and taking me to the police station began to ask me about my parents and the reason I left home. I told them everything and later they sent me with a policeman back to Barela

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

872 EDUCATION AND LITERACY. There does not seem to be any active interest in education on the part of the Kols. In most of the centres visited no Kol children were being sent to school. Of course many of the places were far from the nearest village school. In Barela, however, there is a good school, but of the 125 children of school age among the Kols only two were in this school. We asked the master about these children and he said they were below the average. There are six or seven Kols in Barela who have at one time been in school but not [212] all of them have retained their literacy. Of this number one had read up to the seventh standard and we tried to get from him in writing some facts concerning the Kols, but his responses were very poor and did not give us the insight that we had hoped to get from him. In some places Kols say that they would send their children to school if there were such facilities at hand; but where they are actually at hand they do not take an active interest, and say they cannot afford to spend money on education. There are always one or two families, however, who seem to be interested and who make some attempt to educate their children in the primary schools. In Katni the Church Missionary Society has a school which is situated near one of the sections where Kols live and to which quite a number of Kols have gone at one time or another. There were, however, only sixteen on the list that had done credible work in the past eight years, three of whom had read through the fourth standard. In such schools there is no caste distinction, though in a few other places Kols told us that the schools made distinctions and that their children were not allowed to study with the caste children.

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The Census reports reveal that as a group the Kols are among the most illiterate of the many castes and tribes. For India as a whole the report[1] shows that out of 122,695 Kols aged seven years and over there were only 301 literate persons: 290 men and 11 women. Seven of the men were reported as being literate in English. In the Central Provinces and Berar with 48,500 Hindu Kols and 10,813 Tribal Kols there were but 216 and 6 literates respectively. The proportion in the United Provinces is still less as out of 63,382 Kols only 79 were literate. The United Provinces Census Report[2] puts the Kols 89th in the order of literacy in a list of 95 tribes and castes. It is worked out in that Report that they are 0.24% literate as far as males are concerned and 0.01% for the females. In the Central India Agency out of 151,718 Kols there were 88 males and 50 females literate and two were literate in English. Outside of Rewa State it appears that

162
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212

1 *Census of India*, 1931, I : 1, p. 488.
2 *Ibid.* XVIII : 2, literacy tables.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

there are but three literate Kols in the Central India Agency[1]. It is a well known fact that the illiteracy of the lower groups is a source of much hardship to them as it leads to frauds of various kinds at their expense.

In respect of literacy the Kols do not compare favourably with other tribes and castes. The number of literates per thousand works out, in the case of Kol males, to just under five. For the Kayasths it is 607, the Brahmins 437, Oraons 35, Doms 16, Bhils 11 and Chamars 10. This figure of five in the case of the Kol is also lower, according to the report, than the figure of the Munda groups in Bihar and Orissa returned by the Census of 1931[2].

In the Central Provinces' Report a special subsidiary table of literacy of castes is given both for 1921 and 1931[3]. The average literacy for Central Provinces was 51 per mille in 1931 : 93 per mille in the case of the males and 9 in the case of the females. The respective figures for 1921 were 42, 76 and 7, which would indicate some advances. On this table the Kols as a whole have a literacy of 4 per mille : for the males it is 7 and for the females nil. In 1921 the respective figures were 2 and 4. Taking all the groups listed, and there are seventy tribes and castes selected, there are only three who rank in literacy below the Kols of the Central Provinces : Wadder and Bhil with 3 each and Korku with 2, while two other tribes, Bharias and non-Christian Oraons, rank the same as the Kols with 4 per mille. The Kol thus ranks among the most illiterate groups of the provinces.

OCCUPATIONS OF THE KOLS. Census reports of the Central Provinces have interesting discussions of occupations. The report for 1931 shows that in the province as a whole 776 persons per 1,000 workers were engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetables. Industry comes second with only 92 per 1,000. In the lists of occupations of selected groups we find the following of the Kol tribe :

Kol Tribe	Number per 1,000 earners engaged in each occupation
Agriculturalists ..	160
Field labourers, wood-cutters, etc	560
Raisers of livestock, milkmen, herdsmen ..	17

1 *Ibid.* XX : 2, literacy tables.
2 *Ibid.* I : 1, p. 362.
3 *Ibid.* XII : 1, p. 290.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

prepare tiles in a workshop near Deori; a Barela Kol has taken up the work of a mason and bricklayer. In another family we found that members had been jungle postal-runners for three generations. In Sihora they said that their chief occupation was digging in the fields, though they also cut wood and sold grass; only one or two rented lands. At Katni we found that they were chiefly employed in the cement works, but would soon be going elsewhere, as the cement factories were in the process of closing down. In some of the villages about Katni they were found to be mostly labourers in the surrounding fields. At Kymore thousands are employed in the great cement factories; at Maihar they are mostly engaged in lime-kiln work. Near Rewa City they seem to be mostly serfs and labourers. Further north they grind sandstone for the glass works, and at Chunar in the United Provinces help to dig the rock out of the hillsides. We found a few literate Kols in Katni who had learned to read in the Church Mission School. One of these was a clerk in a warehouse at busy times of the year; the rest of the year he would do whatever he could find which often was nothing but coolie work.

THE SITUATION IN THE VILLAGES: *Land and Income.* In our visits to numerous villages we made enquiries as to the economic situation on the part of the Kols living there. A careful survey was made near Jubbulpore. Text figure 30 shows the area. Only a few Kols in the large group at Barela actually rent lands for farming purposes; either on shares or on straight rent. In Kharara Ghat the situation seems to be the opposite, for nearly every household there holds land from the *malguzar*. Money is earned on the side from the sale of wood, grass and *tendu* leaves for *biris*. In Barela a survey of thirty-nine families indicated that only three held lands, and that the total acreage so held was but 5½ acres. Thirty families in Kharara Ghat hold 82 acres of land; in some cases taxes for the same are paid direct to the Government, while to the *malguzar* they say they pay Rs. 10 per *khandi* of wheat sown, this being considered as 1/3 the produce of the land.

Barela Kols do most of the coolie work on the roads near that place and also labour on the farms as occasion offers. All the able members of the family work and we found that on the average the family income was Rs. ten to twelve per month for this type of labour. One dealer in charcoal said that he cleared locally in Barela about Rs. 120 per year. Another Barela Kol has the custom of purchasing wood from the Gonds who bring it down from the hills near-by. This is bought for five pice, is then cut up into shorter lengths by himself

34 [text continues on middle of p. 266]